MAX WIECZOREK

HIS LIFE AND WORK

LOS ANGELES · MCMXXX · CALIFORNIA

MAX WIECZOREK

HIS LIFE AND WORK

By

EVERETT CARROLL MAXWELL

MCMXXX
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

DEDICATED

TO

GERTRUD BESSER WIECZOREK

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Acknowledgment is made to the editors of International Studio, American Magazine of Art and California Graphic for permission to reprint certain portions of their articles.

Copyrighted 1930
by
MAX WIECZOREK

Printed in U. S. A.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Portrait of Max Wieczorek	
Max Wieczorek, His Life and Work	9-24
Head of Christ	25
Ida Wieczorek	27
Portrait of Mrs. Ida Besser	29
My Oldest Daughter	31
My Youngest Daughter	33
Robert Bruce Nairn	35
Gertrude Nairn	37
Annde	39
La Parisienne	41
Portrait of Dr. William A. Bryan	43
Portrait of A. A. Schmidt, Esq.	45
Portrait of Mrs. A. A. Schmidt	47
Flirtation	49
Portrait of Mrs. Lloyd Stahl	51
Portrait of W. I. Hollingsworth, Esq.	53
Portrait of Gilbert Nairn, Esq.	55
Snowwhite	57
Portrait of Mrs. Charles B. Boothe	59
Portrait of Arthur Fitger, Esq.	61
The Patrician	63
Monna Vanna (Miss Olga Zacsek)	65
Serenata Morisca	67
Portrait of Everett C. Maxwell, Esq.	69
Portrait of Ruth St. Denis	71
The Happy Parting	73
Portrait of Miss Frances Harwood	75
Spanish	77
Portrait of Miss Brophy	79
Young Moses	81
Resignation	83
Portrait of Ruth St. Denis	85
Portrait of Ted Shawn, Esq.	87
Challenge	89
Dawn	91
Study	93
The Mirage	95
Portrait of George Chaffey, Esq.	97
Portrait of Mrs. Elsa Spalding	99
Study of a Lady	101
Mater Dolorosa	103
Oriental Dance	105
Palma Felicitas	107
Girl with Mantilla	109
And She Laughed at Me	111
The Wish	113
Portrait of Miss Louise Leschin	115
Portrait of Miss Joan Leschin	117
Portrait of Capt. Von Mueller	119
The Green Shawl	121
Boy Listening	123
Young Russian	125
Decolletee	127
Miss Coy	129
Lady in Furs	131
Portrait of Charles Lansing Haskell, Esq.	133
Nju (Miss Ann A. Andrews)	135
The Old—and The Young	137

MAX WIECZOREK

Photograph by Arthur Kales

MAX WIECZOREK

His Life and Work

TO THE lover of paintings there is nothing to match in interest the human face and form. Landscape may touch the finer senses, but the portrait, as the highest development of expressive art, pictures to the eye the soul itself. Rodin once said: "The true artist loves life and action. His own being responds to it, and he is ever looking for it in his fellow man. The Greeks taught us, both in their marbles and in their drama, that even struggle can be beautiful. This may of course be physical movement, but more often it is mental or moral struggle."

The average critic, in reviewing the work of a painter, seldom has the time or the inclination to penetrate below the surface. Too often he feels that little would be found beyond a colorful impression and the pattern of a pleasing composition. If this is true of modern landscape painting, where the artist has unlimited poetic license, how much more acute becomes the problem in figure painting, where picturesque attributes are seldom possible, and the artistic result depends not only on fine draughtsmanship and sound technique, but on the far deeper meaning of life itself.

The majority of portrait renderings we see deal only with surfaces. They do not reach down into life and tear away the mask. In order to understand life, one must live it. Few artistic workers do so. They toy with it—experiment with it, but seldom achieve it. Few comprehend the real significance of portraiture or appreciate its essential qualities. This may be due to the fact that so few artists employ vital elements in their renderings. The accepted academic

method seems to deal largely with a form of characterization in which a pleasing likeness is the paramount objective.

Surely a portrait may be a likeness and a work of art at the same time! Otherwise why go to the expense and trouble of having a portrait painted? Why not be satisfied with the graphic accuracy of a camera study? After all argument is exhausted, the ultimate end of art is decoration in the finest sense of the word. Few portraits ever remotely approach such a purpose.

The acid test of successful portraiture is that presence of artistic appeal that fires the casual observer with a desire to possess the canvas regardless of the fact that he does not know, or never has seen, the subject. How seldom is this the case!

The landscapist, like the poet, can mask behind his song. The figure painter must reveal himself without adornment, and be able to overcome the superficialities of his subject.

The art galleries of the world house thousands of great landscape renderings; masterpieces of portraiture are very low in the numeral scale. Great portraiture comes late in the artistic development of a people—it means psychology, the social note—civilization. This is life as the mystic El Greco, as the magician Goya, painted it, and as Bellows depicted it.

The critic always shrinks from an exhibition of portraits. Experience has taught him that the average portrait painter lacks the courage of his convictions. In spite of technical skill his canvasses invariably fall into the commonplace, and a mediocre portrait is unquestionably the saddest object on earth. As a rule one tolerates portraits solely out of sentiment.

A portrait at its best is an artistic conception where both the painter and the model combine to reveal their respective personalities. It should not be too much of either one or the other.

A splendid illustration of these principles may be derived from a study of the portraits by Max Wieczorek—artist, scholar, and humanitarian, whose work I have known intimately over a long and consistent period of development.

Those who have had the opportunity to study his forceful yet decorative renderings realize that here is an intensely human, as well as a sensitive, interpretative artist. This is a rare combination seldom met with in art circles.

Max Wieczorek has been a genial student of both life and art, and his struggle has been difficult and long. Emerging, he has become an aristocrat of art, in violent contrast to the democratic breadth of his sympathies. Intolerant only with the insincere, he interests himself solely in the truth and beauty of life, and finds these qualities even in the foibles of mankind.

He directs his searching pastel point much as a duelist handles his rapier. He pierces the flesh and draws blood. He is not afraid to paint unlovely truths. His art is adult and thoroughly masculine; it has a martial note, hence it is an affair of bone and sinew—yet always a decoration. Truly a strange anomaly!

Always back and beyond the graceful, ornamental quality of these drawings lies a structural building up, not unlike an architectural rendering in accuray and design. Intellectually Wieczorek would have developed into a great genre painter, had he not elected to make portraiture his life work. Often his handling becomes

detailed without being small. Many times his sense of characterization approaches the telling quality of the tragic. The mental and moral struggle appeals to him, and his expressive lines delineate its action upon mind and body.

I sometimes wonder if he is conscious of this, or if it may be the reflex of his trained hand responding to his analytical mind, more or less subconsciously.

He employs French pastels as his sole medium, applying them directly and simply and without any effort to omit the constructive lines necessary in blocking in a composition. Little is rubbed off or changed after a line is once placed. The colors are permanent and retain their full brilliancy, as is proven by the pastels of La Tour, and others of the French school.

In his work Wieczorek is always an individualist. He is a born draughtsman, yet never fails to produce a work of art, plus a speaking, spirited likeness. Often his renderings are sophisticated, smart, but never flippant or bizarre. He never takes his subjects too seriously and he has the secret of pleasing them by pleasing himself. His models belong to reality, and are of the earth, earthy, but, elevated to a higher plane, they seem to react to new laws and to acquire a keener existence from new relationships of life as interpreted by this artist's imperious skill.

In presenting his work, the "American Magazine of Art" states: "No California artist has remained more constantly in favor with both the artists and the public than Max Wieczorek. To him will always belong the credit of having evolved a style in portraiture which has so far outdistanced his contemporaries that he has remained solitary and alone—without imitators. He does

not always aim to appeal entirely to our emotions from a purely beautiful or spiritual side, yet he brings the vital human aspect of the sitter before us in an intensely virile yet often naive manner.

There is slight variation to be observed in his works. He has not been susceptible to extraneous influences, and, no doubt, rightly considers his own method quite equal to any he has seen. It is not this single-mindedness alone that has raised Wieczorek above the average portrait painter of his day. Rather, I think it is to be attributed to the superiority of his temperament.

One feels that he employs his pastel point much as an etcher uses his needle upon the copper plate. This ingenious use of the medium gives a soft texture of flesh and flowing draperies that the brush has never yet achieved. Tints are used only to give added refinement, to emphasize motives, and to create the sense of rhythm."

The fact that Dudley Crafts Watson, formerly director of the Milwaukee Art Institute, and one of America's foremost authorities and lecturers in the field of the Fine Arts, has lectured on Wieczorek's collection to the classes of the Institute, is, in itself, proof of the high quality of the work and a guaranty of its merit.

Mr. Watson writes thus of this artist's work: "Wieczorek's art has almost entirely to do with the characterization of interesting people, through deft and decorative pictorial interpretation of their countenances. Rapidity and ease of performance, elimination of superfluity, and simplicity without sparseness, mark his portrait compositions. There is a richness of design, an abundance of accessories, a spontaneous play of light, without being over rich, or unduly stressing the third dimension. His art is not modern in an abstract sense and he is not obviously interested in the 'isms'; neither

are ninety-nine per cent of the citizens of America. Wieczorek is an expression of transplanted European knowledge, wisdom and taste, nurtured in fresh soil, to a fruition impossible in the old clime.

One would like to spend a lot of time expounding the subtle interpretation and the far-seeing characterization of his sitters, or to soar into verbal rapture over the suave line, the exquisite drawing, the restraint in texture and color, or the facile manipulation of form, but do not all these express themselves obviously to one who will scan a few of his portraits? In every picture that Max Wieczorek creates there is more than the portrait of an individual; he feels with a sixth sense, and brings about a mystic unity, a spiritual entity, which fixes the externalities as if we were seeing in a glass clearly, the pulsing soul."

The idealistic conception of "Monna Vanna" is an excellent illustration of this artist's power of depicting character, which enables him to infuse so much seductive charm into his women portraits, and such trenchant vigor into those of men.

One of the most interesting and important of the artist's collection of letters of appreciation is this very revealing and characteristic one from Will Livingston Comfort, the novelist. The letter reads: "I went into the Biltmore Salon the other day—a glance here and there. You know, the arts are one at the core, and a man who has striven hard in one, recognizes certain vitalities in the others. I did not see anything until I came to "Monna Vanna," then I sat down. I stayed many minutes and I saw a woman that I loved. I think each will find that. She is not the new woman nor the old. She is utterly yielding, yet protected by her own spirit;

she transcends man, law, but in her eyes is the Search. The meaning of the Search is very dear and mysterious to me. She searches for that in the eyes of another, which is unconsciously awake in herself. She does not want words or laws; there is union, in fact, save that the other must be what she is—must know what she knows. Of course this is trying to express the inexpressible, but still I keep trying to do this through all the days. This picture gave me something to live with, and, when I found afterward that it was yours, I was very glad indeed that it was so, because I had heard of your long and ardent devotion to the game. I salute you with appreciation."

Antony Anderson, the critic, describing Wieczorek's work, writes:

"Wieczorek does not, of course, employ full color in his drawings. He touches it in lightly here and there, sometimes on a considerable area, sometimes, in brighter tints, for accent and sparkle. A flake of vermillion here, of green there—on a laughing lip or a flashing jewel. Intricate and delicate tracery of a lace mantilla with a stick of pointed charcoal and, intertwined, a thread of gold, with a piece of chalk. Here is lace rarer than any woven on loom or spindle—lace spun from an artist's imagination and feeling for beauty. Values are not easily obtained when a big part of one's picture is blank paper, however ingeniously that paper may be toned to the general scheme of color, but somehow Wieczorek achieves this result. He suggests much with a few light touches, cleverly leading your imagination to fill out the hiatus. This is art, especially the art of pastel drawing, whose effects are often as delicate as the bloom on a peach."

"The International Studio," in presenting the work of Wieczorek, states: "He always draws with a tout-le-monde mind. He has a sense of social relation and obligation. He has been a genial student of life, who from his coign of vantage looks upon the passing show, feels its superficial attraction, yet penetrates beneath its surface, and through it all, loves and believes in the human creatures who constitute it and whom he delineates so unerringly in his decorative pastels."

Often this artist's best works deal with ripened maturity. Men who have experienced life and women who have loved deeply. He reads character in terms of struggle and fortitude. In a few portraits he dwells upon the mellowness and dignity of old age, as in the prize winning canvas of Mrs. Ida Besser. This speaks in reverence of a life well lived in usefulness and understanding, now resplendent and luminous as a golden autumnal sunset.

In contrast to this is the stalwart quality of uncompromising maturity seen in the portrait of George Chaffey, Esq. Like a noble oak that has withstood storm and stress, and, though veteran, is as firmly rooted and as fit as of yore, and who is still the shrewd captain of finance, russet from the benefits of a long life well and charitably lived.

The well known portrait of Ruth St. Denis reveals the artist in yet another and wholly reverse mood, for here he deals sympathetically with a fellow artist; a woman of rare graces and refinement, a fusion of fire and ice, exquisite, exotic, temperamental, spirituelle—a connoisseur of life's experiences and an artist to her fingertips. Without pose or effort, Wieczorek accomplishes this task, with the result that this canvas, dealing with a difficult subject, is one of his finest.

There have been many conceptions of the Christ character. A few approach an artistic satisfaction. Very few create a healthy religious atmosphere. The classic antiquity of the subject intrigued Wieczorek, and he painted "Head of Christ" which hangs in the private collection of Charles O. Middleton of Santa Barbara.

It interprets the "Man of Sorrows" as a vital, yet tender intellectualist of the highest order of his race. A strong, high forehead, firm mouth and determined jaws, sensitive nostrils, and deep, wide-set eyes—eyes that look far—almost challenging in determination—yet deep with sadness and disappointment. He sees humanity centuries ahead. What a tragic vision to a man whose one desire was to leave with us the secret of his law of life, love and eternal happiness!

Of this study, Rev. Elmer Ellsworth Helms writes:

"I have visited, not once but a number of times, all the great Art Galleries of Europe. And, naturally, being a preacher, my study has specialized on strictly Bible and Christian themes and subjects. Again and again, in studying faces of the Christ, by many different artists, I have turned away always from each and every one with a feeling of disappointment. Either the face was so weak or it was so provincial and national. Da Vinci's Christ is purely Italian; Titian's, Venetian; Durer's, German; Matsy's, Flemish; Schaeffer's, American. They all painted a Christ but none of them painted The Christ. Max Wieczorek has come the nearest to giving us a portrait of my conception of The Christ, of any artist who has ever ventured into this difficult realm."

Few painters dare to delineate beautiful women plus their human earthly qualities. Study "Flirtation," "Nju," "Rene" and

"She Laughed at Me," and see what may be accomplished to infuse life and sex meaning into a superbly painted decoration without becoming personal, flippant, or commonplace.

These figures live, breathe, and attract, in their abundance of exuberant existence. Here we see the true artist smile. We enjoy with him an art solitude à deux.

Limited space forbids mention of other important and delightful studies, but in estimating these few, I have given the reader extreme contrasts, opened a vista, and constructed a basis not alone for individual opinion, but for personal observation and study, which I trust may be helpful to the student, and fruitful for the connoisseur.

Wieczorek was born in Silesia, his father being Polish, his mother German. Among his neighbors and early associates at Breslau, was Gerhardt Hauptmann, the now famous author and playwright, whom the artist remembers as a quiet, self-centered boy, with a decided lisp, and with no apparent bent toward greatness. Wieczorek took a course in natural sciences at the University of Breslau, the capital of Silesia. Later he served in the Prussian army and became an officer in the 109th regiment, the bodyguard of the Grand Duke of Baden. At the age of twenty he entered the art school at Karlsruhe, studying under Ferdinand Keller. Leaving the southern part of Germany, he traveled and studied through the Tyrol and in Italy. He remained there for several years, spending most of the time on the Riviera near Genova.

He resumed his art studies at Munich, and later in Weimar, under Professor Max Thedy, one of the most successful painters

of the Piloty School. He was also greatly influenced by Count Leopold Von Kalckreuth, who then held a professorship at the Academy in Weimar.

About this time he thought of going to Iceland with Andreas Dirks, the marine painter, who was his friend, but was lured away by the charms of an old fisher village on the Baltic sea, where he remained some years painting the fishermen and their picturesque huts, and living their simple life. From here he sent pictures to all the well-known exhibitions in Germany, Paris, London, Brussels and Scotland.

After coming to America, Wieczorek became interested in the art of designing for stained glass windows. He studied the art in all its phases, and remained for ten years with the Tiffany studios.

However, Wieczorek's first love was for landscape painting, which he followed for a lengthy period with marked success. Portraiture was a later development of his artistic growth.

The artist, with reference to his work, recently stated: "I am not in sympathy with either the old academic or the extreme modernistic methods. I try to strike a happy medium in my own work."

"In my opinion, a good work of art, no matter whether painting, sculpture or architecture, should be decorative, well composed, express a profound thought, and above all, be sincere—otherwise it will be of doubtful value, no matter how brilliant the technique. To paint a successful portrait, the subject must be approached with a profound understanding of human nature—an understanding that sees behind the mask of a smile and a new gown. Life is more vital than beautiful, and man is a strange complex, but invariably

responds to a sense of humor, and by this method, I try to reach an at-one-ment between myself and the model, which usually brings about a successful result. The majority of people know their own shortcomings, and, secretly, are not altogether ashamed of them. They enjoy being treated—and painted—like human beings."

I take this to mean that to the eye of a trained artist, the average person has few, if any, pictorial possibilities or artistic attributes, and, hence, picturesque accessories are seldom possible in the painting of portraits.

Those who can afford to order portraits have reached a degree of prominence socially and financially, and, usually, the face and the figure have suffered. Strong characteristics and marked individuality may remain, and out of these the crafty painter must evolve a work of art, pleasing to his patron and productive of financial returns. The average artist is afraid to tell the truth on canvas. Max Wieczorek is an exception,—he is not afraid to paint life—and his success has been phenomenal.

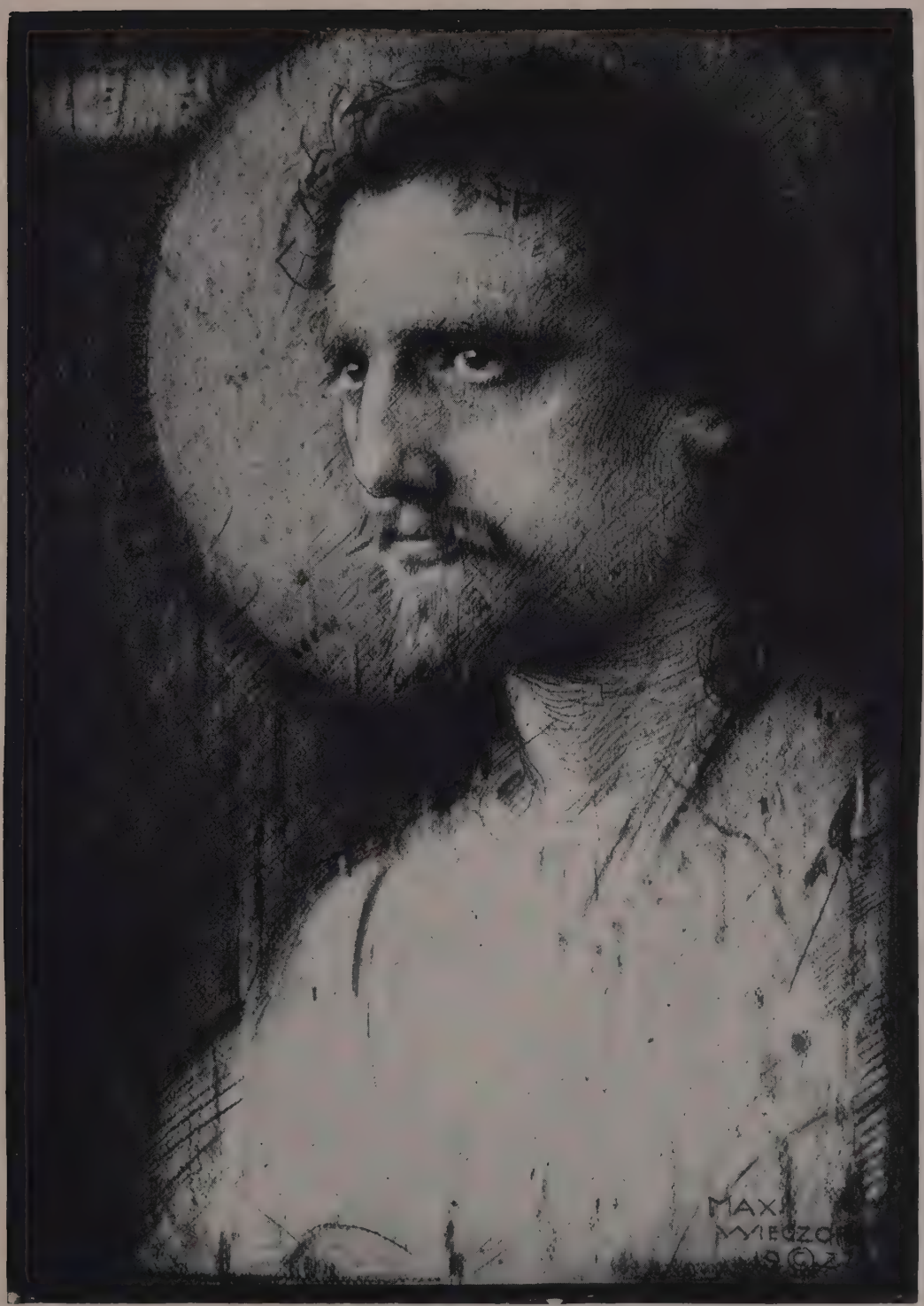
His later renderings show a maturity and ripeness, a solidity and sophistication only remotely suggested in earlier works. In fundamental essentials, the artist's work shows but slight variation. He has evidently felt content with his medium and his muse. His academic training was complete long before he became a studio worker. Of his draughtsmanship he is sure. Consequently his mind is free to study the more vital essentials that go to make up a lasting work of art.

He has won many honors, received many awards, is a member of a score of leading clubs and associations, has painted many great people in both the social and financial world.

Wieczorek's work has been hung in the leading exhibitions throughout Europe and America: namely, Paris Salon, Crystal Palace, London; Societe Royale, Antwerp; Panama Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco; Museum of History, Science and Art, Los Angeles; San Francisco Art Association, San Francisco; New York Water Colour Club, American Water Colour Society, National Arts Club, New York; Art Institute of Chicago, and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia. He has received many medals, prizes and honorable mentions, all very flattering to those who predicted such an advent long before it actually transpired.

A man of superb military bearing, born to command and to love—a friend supreme; he has recognized that life, as he has lived it, is one vast maze of joy and sorrow, and every principle of truth and beauty that he employs in his art is translated from his great composite esthetic experience—called life.

REPRODUCTIONS IN HALFTONE



HEAD OF CHRIST

IDA WIECZOREK

PORTRAIT OF MRS. IDA BESSER

MY OLDEST DAUGHTER

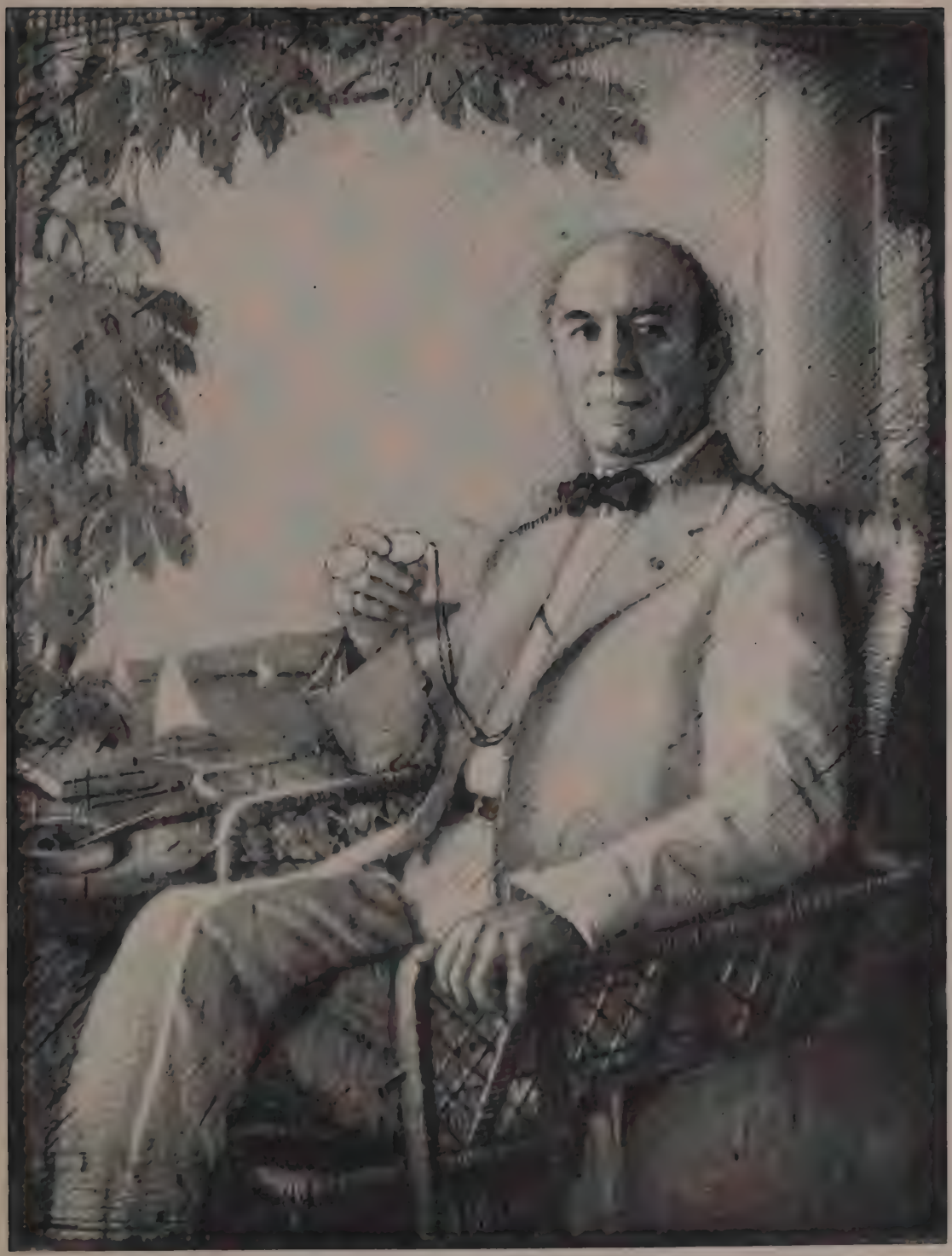
MY YOUNGEST DAUGHTER

ROBERT BRUCE NAIRN

GERTRUDE NAIRN

ANNDE

LA PARISIENNE



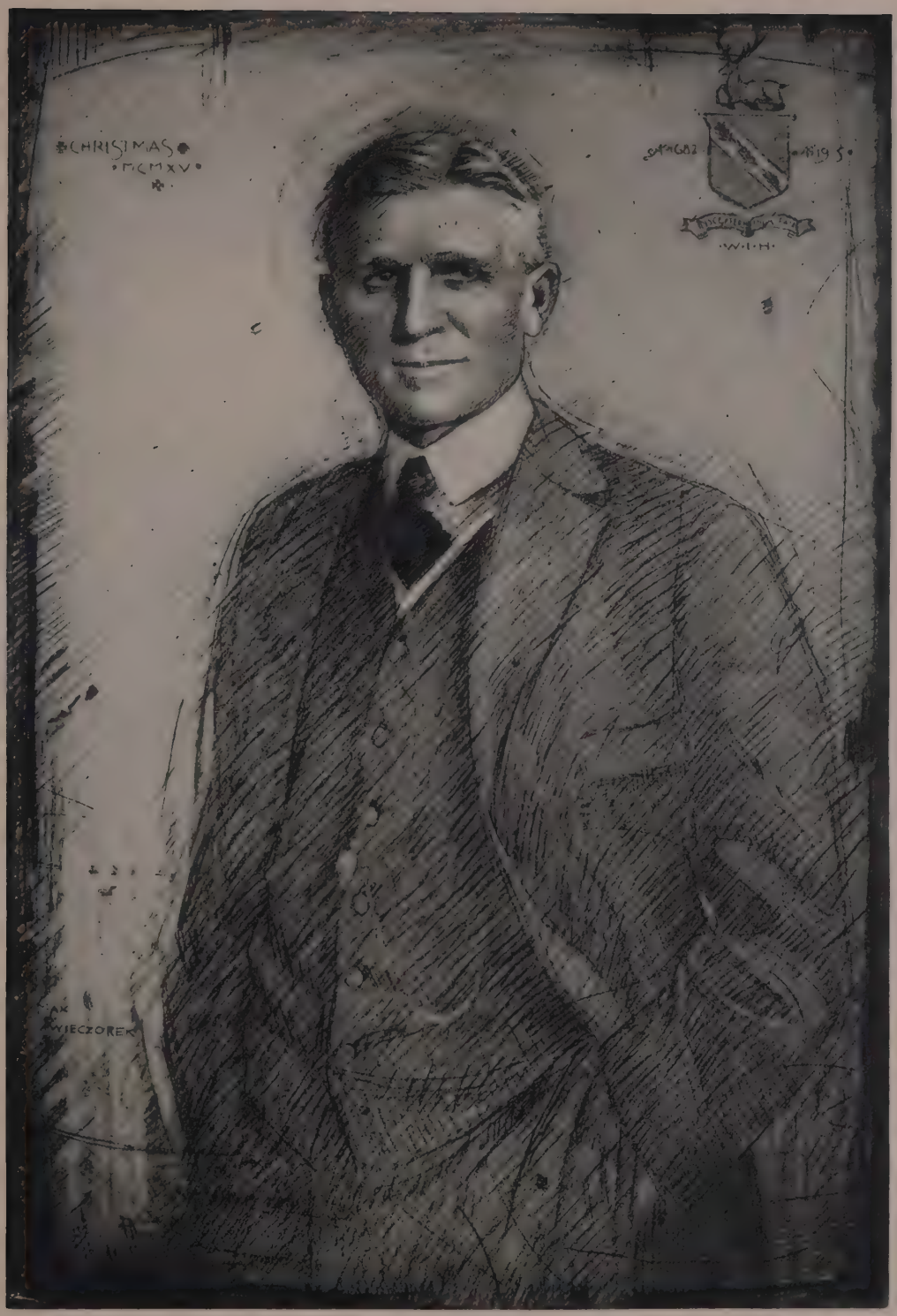
PORTRAIT OF DR. WILLIAM A. BRYAN

PORTRAIT OF A. A. SCHMIDT, ESQ.

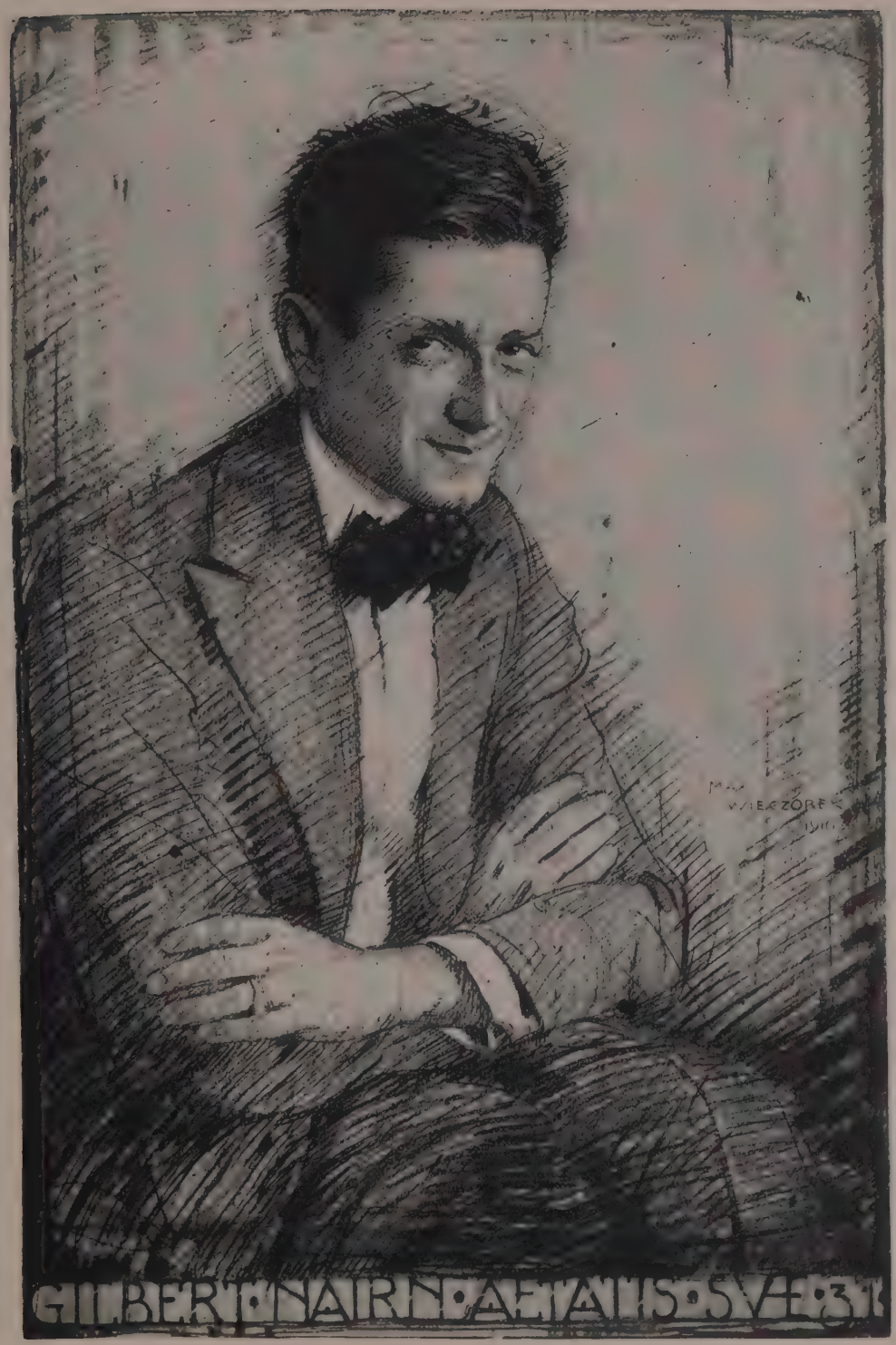
PORTRAIT OF MRS. A. A. SCHMIDT

FLIRTATION

PORTRAIT OF MRS. LLOYD STAHL



PORTRAIT OF W. I. HOLLINGSWORTH, ESQ.



PORTRAIT OF GILBERT NAIRN, ESQ.

SNOWWHITE

PORTRAIT OF MRS. CHARLES B. BOOTHE

PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR FITGER, ESQ.

THE PATRICIAN

MONNA VANNA
(MISS OLGA ZACSEK)

SERENATA MORISCA

PORTRAIT OF EVERETT C. MAXWELL, ESQ.

PORTRAIT OF RUTH ST. DENIS

THE HAPPY PARTING

PORTRAIT OF MISS FRANCES HARWOOD

SPANISH

PORTRAIT OF MISS BROPHY

YOUNG MOSES

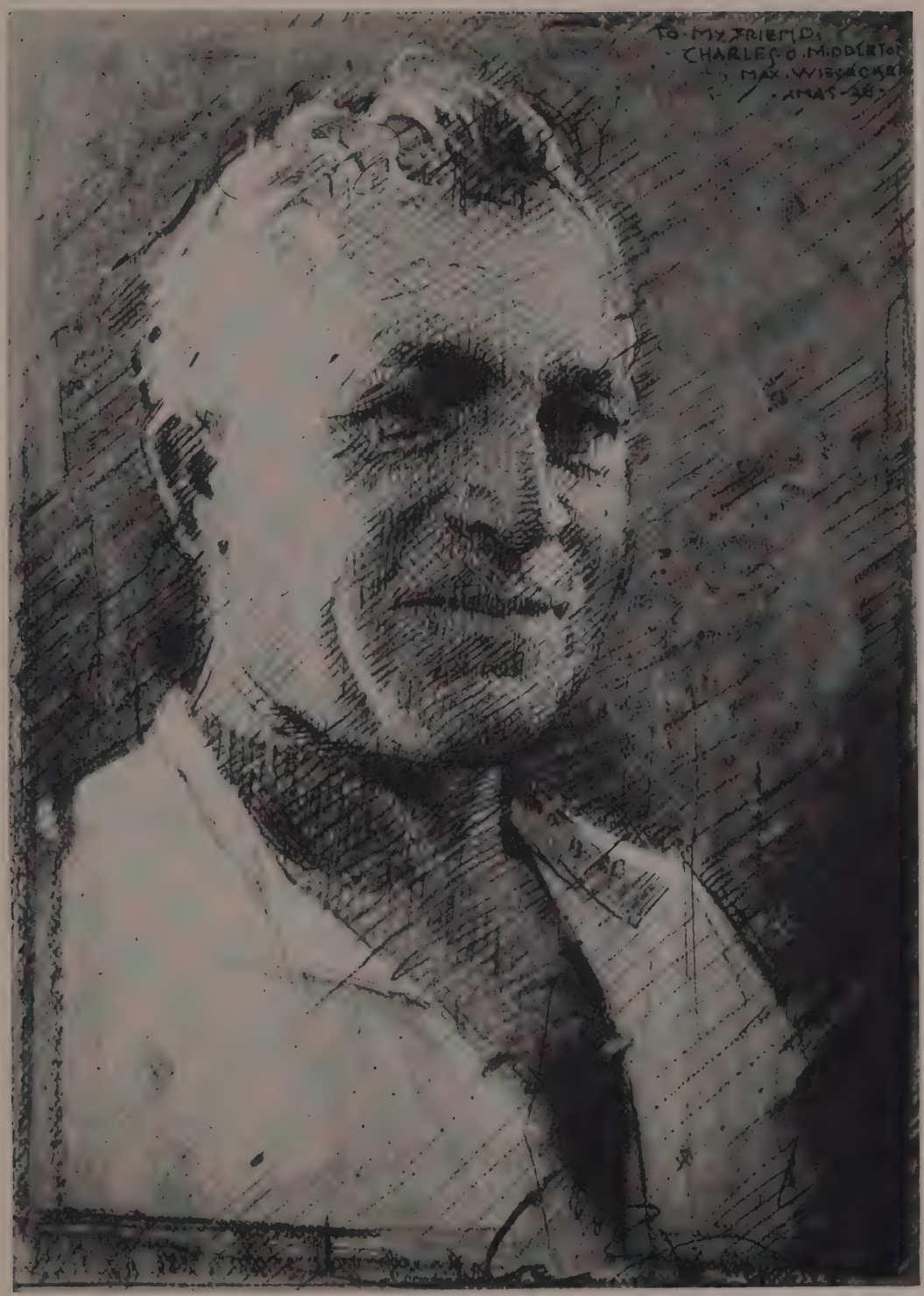
RESIGNATION

PORTRAIT OF RUTH ST. DENIS

PORTRAIT OF TED SHAWN, ESQ.

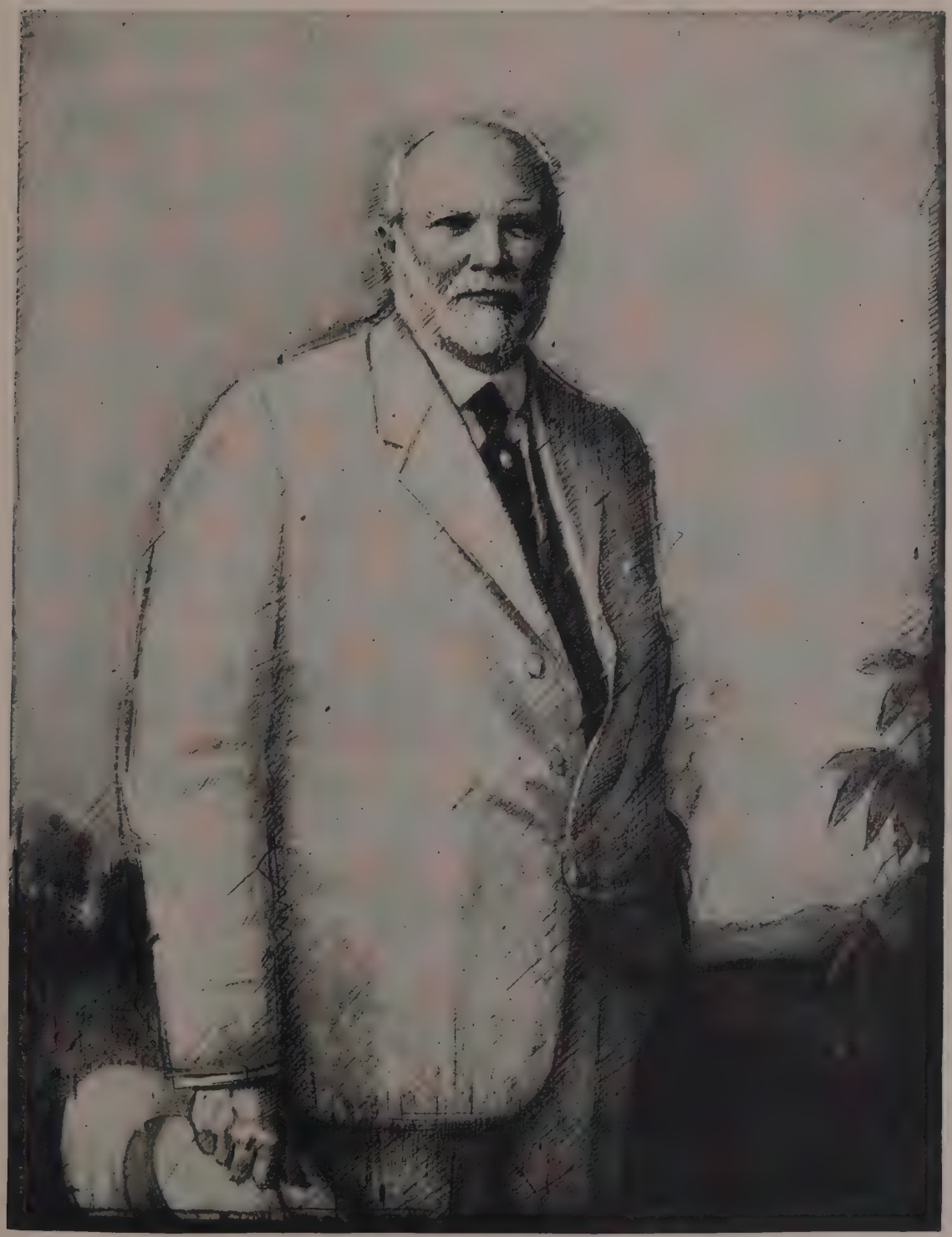
CHALLENGE

DAWN



STUDY

THE MIRAGE



PORTRAIT OF GEORGE CHAFFEY, ESQ.

PORTRAIT OF MRS. ELSA SPALDING

STUDY OF A LADY

MATER DOLOROSA

ORIENTAL DANCE

PALMA FELICITAS

GIRL WITH MANTILLA

AND SHE LAUGHED AT ME

THE WISH

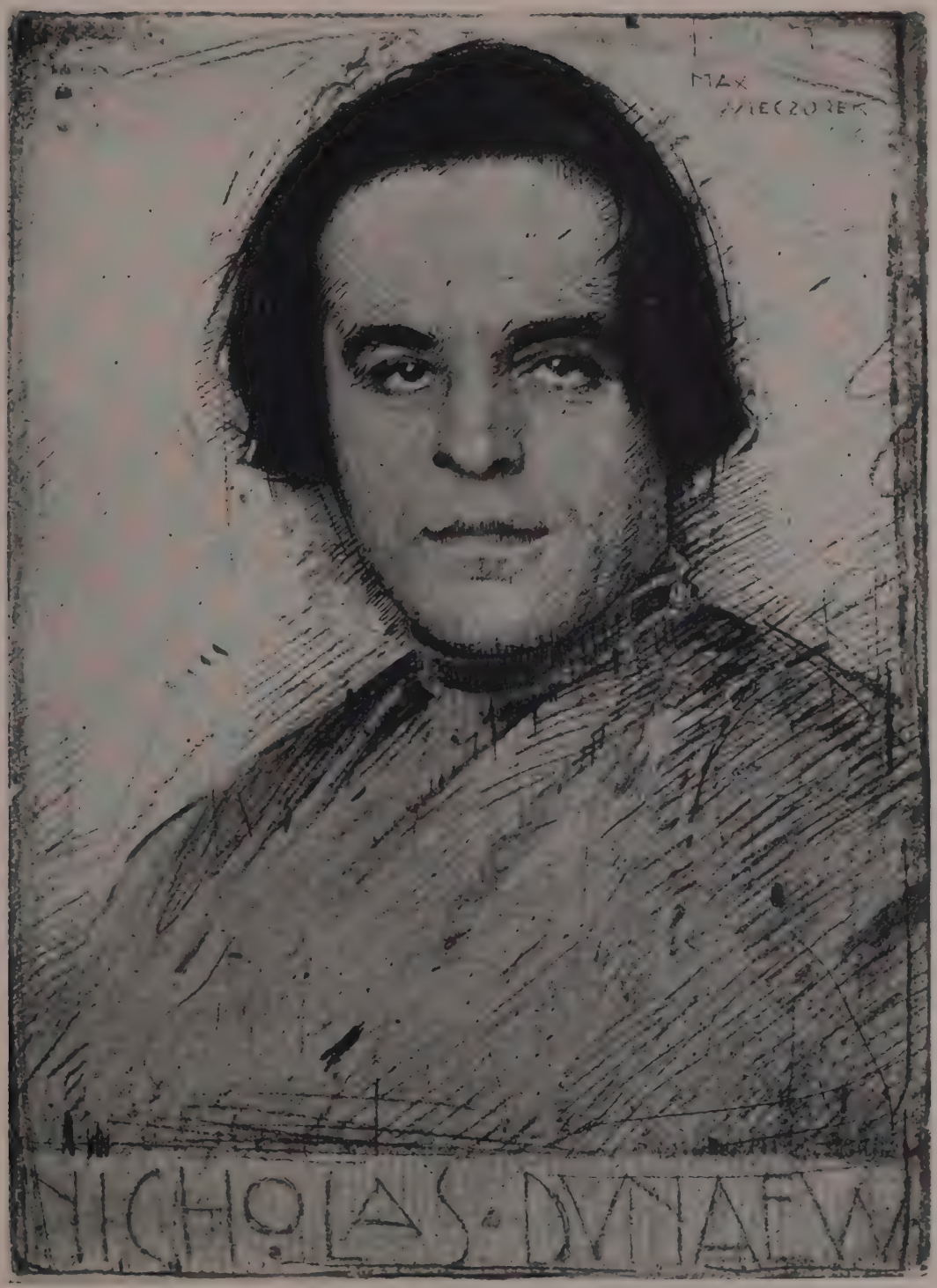
PORTRAIT OF MISS LOUISE LESCHIN

PORTRAIT OF MISS JOAN LESCHIN

PORTRAIT OF CAPT. VON MUELLER

THE GREEN SHAWL

BOY LISTENING

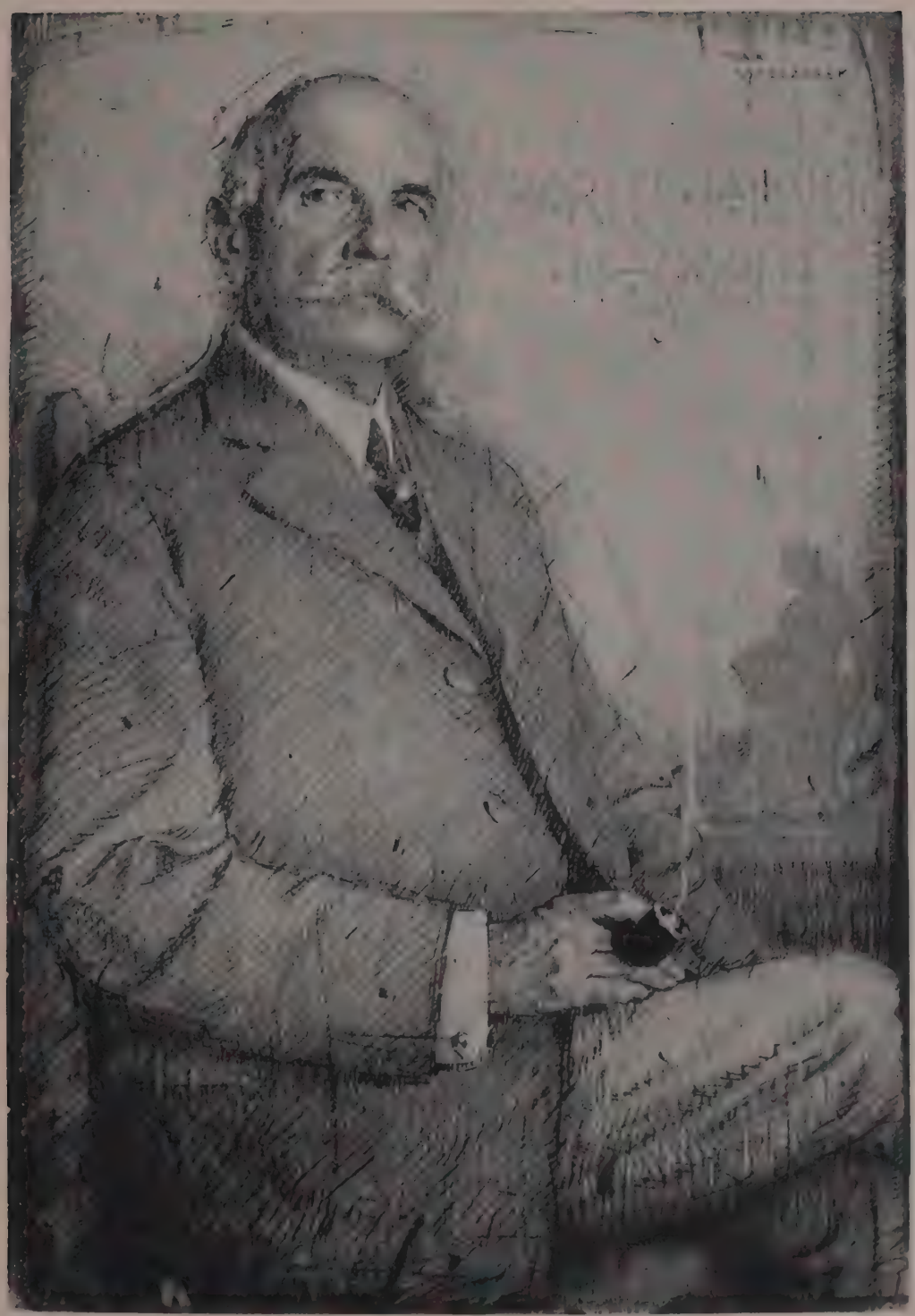


YOUNG RUSSIAN

DECOLLETEE

MISS COY

LADY IN FURS



PORTRAIT OF CHARLES LANSING HASKELL, ESQ.

NJU
(MISS ANN A. ANDREWS)

THE OLD—AND THE YOUNG

PRESS OF
PHILLIPS PRINTING CO.
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.